DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 971 EA 006 894

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TITLE Curriculum/Instructional Change Through State Education Agencies.
PUB DATE 31 Mar 75
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (60th, Washington, D.C., March 31-April 3, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Bibliographies; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Planning; *Data Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; School Surveys; *State Departments of Education; State Programs; *State School District Relationship; Tables (Data); *Taxonomy

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the tasks and practices by which State education agencies (SEAs) can influence curricular and instructional change at the local school level. To gather data for their analysis, the authors reviewed the literature on SEAs and studied documents pertaining to the functions and practices of SEAs in 32 States. In addition, an intensive study was made of the Illinois SEA and its relationship to elementary and secondary schools in the State. From these data, the authors develop several detailed taxonomies that describe the objectives and practices of SEAs, the effectiveness of SEA practices as perceived by local school personnel, and the characteristics of local schools that affect their perception of SEA effectiveness. Included are a number of figures and tables summarizing much of the data on which the authors base their analysis. (JG)

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ED103971

CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE THROUGH STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

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EA 006 894

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association in Washington, D.C., March 31, 1975

CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE THROUGH STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

A task ⟶ practice approach*

William L. Humm
Robert L. Buser

The enactment of the Elementary Secondary Education Act of 1965 -- specifically the titles and subsequent amendments designed to strengthen state education agencies (SEA's) -- posed new challenges to most state departments. The challenges were unique in that they were accompanied by financial resources as well as expectations for curriculum/instructional change. While the SEA's were suddenly thrust into a context characterized by increased monies and leadership expectations, they were soon to confront two realities: first, most SEA's did not have a strong tradition as agents for educational change; second, but of equal import; they were expected to implement change without benefit of either a significant body of empirically based research or tested models from which to implement their new found role. In short, the dilemna of the typical SEA was that of increased leadership responsibility, relatively adequate financial resources, but a paucity of tradition and research based models from which to develop direction or means to accomplish change at the local school level.

Purpose

It was within this context that the writers set about to analyze the tasks and practices (means) by which SEA's might influence curricular

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*The contents of this paper are elaborated in detail in a monograph entitled Curriculum-Instructional Change Through State Education Agency Leadership: A Manual for State Education Agency Personnel by Buser and Humm. Source: Studies in Adult Education, College of Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1974.

and instructional change at the local school level. Our immediate focus was three-fold:

(1) To identify the tasks (objectives) that might be implemented by SEA's in the process of improving educational activities at the local school level;

(2) To identify the practices (means) available to SEA's to achieve given objectives;

(3) To construct taxonomies or classifications of the identified tasks and practices.

Rationale

It was anticipated that these taxonomies would be useful at both the theoretical and applicational levels. At the theoretical level the aims were: (1) to develop a conceptual framework or model from which to design instrumentation and processes for the evaluation of alternative means of achieving specified SEA objectives; (2) to identify the tasks to be achieved by an SEA in the implementation of improved curriculum-instructional activities in the local schools.

At the applicational level the aims were: (1) to provide SEA personnel with an inventory of potential means (herein referred to as practices) from which they might choose alternative courses of action to achieve given objectives; (2) to provide SEA planners with one means to plan and evaluate the efficacy of alternative practices; (3) to establish bases for the development of functional in-service training programs for SEA personnel assigned responsiblity for curriculum-instructional change in local schools; and (4) to suggest guidelines for the direction of SEA personnel interested in effecting change at the school level.

Conceptual Base

The contents that follow were drawn largely from investigations spanning a four year period culminating in Humm's 1972 Illinois study.[1]

The research activity was initiated in 1968 through in-depth structured interviews with 50 plus key personnel of the Illinois SEA that extended over a two-year period. During this time the investigators analyzed documents from 32 states to ascertain the functions and practices of SEA's intended to improve instruction in the respective states. Subsequently, a questionnaire designed to elicit the perceptions of SEA personnel relative to the tasks (objectives) and practices (means) deemed most appropriate and effective was field tested in Florida. Finally, in 1970, a refined questionnaire was sent to a sample of elementary and secondary school superintendents, principals, and curriculum personnel from 101 Illinois counties.

Additionally, we reviewed the literature related to statements of SEA functions and found that they were typically so general as to provide little direction to SEA practitioners. Illustrative of these broad or global statements of functions is the classification used by Beach[2] in categorizing SEA activities as leadership, regulatory, and operational. Campbell and Layton[3] identified five areas of SEA activities: operational, regulatory, service, developmental, and public support and cooperation. Similarly, the SEAs of Maryland,[4] Minnesota,[5] and Iowa[6] described their functions as leadership, regulatory, and operational while Louisiana[7] expanded the leadership function to include planning, advisory, coordination, research, public relations, and in-service education. Washington[8] reported the two general categories of leadership-service and regulatory, then listed additional functions including administration and evaluation, materials and resources, pre-service education, in-service education, and coordinating activities with somewhat more specific functions outlined in more detail. A review of the documents secured from 32 SEA's in response

to a request for descriptions of their functions relative to changed curriculum-instructional practices in local schools, led the writers to conclude that only seven (approximately 20 percent) were able to provide well-developed statements of purpose. In short, these statements, as well as those found in the review of literature, were judged to be so general that they would provide inadequate direction to SEA personnel responsible for improved curriculum-instruction activities in the local schools.

Outcomes

The products of these preliminary studies were two-fold:

One: A Taxonomy of State Education Agency Tasks*

Since the writings related to the functions of SEA's were judged to inadequately describe the activites of SEA's, and certainly were not detailed enough to suggest specific courses of action or practices for SEA personnel, the writers deemed it necessary to develop statements of function or purpose in an improved form. The criteria against which these were developed were as follows:

The statements should:

a. be stated in an action oriented form, i.e., a form that implies action on the part of the initiator, in this instance personnel of the SEA;

b. identify the outcome consequent upon the action of the initiator;

c. identify the target group to which the SEA activity is to be directed;

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*A task is defined as the specific act, chore, or job to be accomplished by the initiator--in this instance the SEA--for the purpose of achieving a desired outcome, i.e., a change in a local school curriculum-instruction activity.

d. be stated in a form that is specific and descriptive enough to provide direction to the initiator; and

e. be in a format that enhances the potential for evaluating the effectiveness of alternative practices that might be employed by SEA's.

The application of the above criteria, although not strictly applied in every case, led to the selection of the task oriented format; i.e., one in which the tasks were described in terms of the acts or behaviors of the initiator.

The next step was to identify and state the tasks. This was accomplished through an analysis of: (1) the established statements of functions of SEA's; (2) interviews and questionnaire responses of SEA personnel and local school personnel; (3) the educational change process as discussed in the literature; and (4) a reflection upon personal experiences as employees and consultants with SEA's. The outcome is presented in Figure 1. (At this point it should be noted that even though the tasks are categorized and enumerated on a research to practice continuum, it is not suggested or implied that their relationship is linear or sequential.)

In the conceptualization of this taxonomy the writers were heavily influenced by the writings of Guba, Clark,[9] Rogers,[10] and Bricker.[11] In addition, we were influenced by the suggestions of SEA and local school personnel who participated in the Florida pilot study and the Illinois study.

Two: Practices* By Which State Education Agencies Influence Curriculum and Instructional Activities in Local Schools

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*A practice is defined as a describable means by which a SEA consciously seeks to influence a curriculum-instructional activity in a local school.

FIGURE 1

THE BUSER-HUMM TAXONOMY OF TASKS IMPLEMENTED BY STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES IN THE PROCESS OF EFFECTING CHANGED CURRICULUM-INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

Research

T-1. To identify the existence of promising educational programs and practices that might be of interest to local school personnel.

T-2. To conduct research for the purposes of providing local school personnel with reliable information relative to the availability and desirability of specific educational programs and practices in terms of student achievement, feasibility, and implications for adoption.

Development

T-3. To invent, design, or develop new educational programs and practices for use in the schools of the state.

T-4. To package educational programs or practices in a form that makes them usable in the schools of the state.

Dissemination

T-5. To create an awareness among local school personnel of the availability of desirable educational programs or practices.

T-6. To create an interest among local school personnel in the potential or promise of a specific educational program or practice.

T-7. To cause a number of the schools of the state to implement a specific educational program or practice on a pilot basis.

T-8. To apprise local school personnel of the results of the pilot testing of a specific educational program or practice.

T-9. To cause the schools of the state to adopt or implement a specific educational program or practice.

Training

T-10. To train local school personnel in procedures for diagnosing instructional program needs and prescribing appropriate solutions.

T-11. To train local school personnel to use specific educational programs and practices in the schools of the state.

Quality Control

T-12. To aid local school personnel in the process of implementing educational programs and practices new to their schools.

T-13. To aid local school personnel in the process of maintaining the quality of new and/or established educational programs and practices in their school.

Evaluation

T-14. To cause the schools of the state to evaluate their present educational programs and practices for the purpose of improvement through modification.

T-15. To conduct evaluations of educational programs and practices in the schools of the state.

A pressing problem confronting SEA personnel with planning or decision making responsibility is the selection of the most effective means by which to achieve a desired outcome. Obviously, the quality of a decision is necessarily limited by the feasibility of the alternatives from which a choice is to be made. In order to provide practicing SEA personnel with a comprehensive inventory of alternative means by which to influence local school activity, an inventory of 45 practices is presented in taxonomic form in Figure 2.*

LEA Perceptions of the Tasks and Practices Used by the SEA to Influence Curriculuar and Instructional Change in the Local Schools

The identification of SEA tasks focused on changing curricular and instructional activities in local schools was felt to require evaluation in the same way that input to systems are frequently tested -- through collection of the perceptions of the affected individuals and/or organizations. Given this premise, and the condition that the tasks prescribed were a coalescence of SEA task analysis and conceptual writings on educational change, it was deemed most appropriate to obtain the perceptions of LEA personnel to the tasks. Additionally, it was determined that LEA perceptions of the practices employed by SEA's in an effort to change curriculum/instruction in the schools were by a similar reasoning equally valuable.

Questions Investigated

Accordingly, a study was designed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What do local school personnel view as the most critical (le st critical) tasks which the SEA might implement for the purpose of influencing curriculum and instructional activities in local schools?

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*Presented here is an outline of the taxonomy; the complete Taxonomy of Practices is contained in pp. 21-30 of the monograph, Curriculum-Instructional Changes Through State Education Agency Leadership.

FIGURE 2

Buser-Humm Classification of Practices By Which State Education Agencies Effect Changed Curriculum/ Instructional Activities in Local Schools

1. PUBLICATIONS
   - 1-1. House Organs of the State Education Agency
   - 1-2. Letters and Memoranda
   - 1-3. News Release
   - 1-4. Instructional Guides, Bulletins, Monographs, and Resources
   - 1-5. Articles in Journals other than those published by the SEA
   - 1-6. Films, Filmstrips, Recordings, and Video Tapes disseminated by the SEA

2. SCHOOL VISITATIONS: CONSULTATION, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION
   - 2-1. Supervisory Visits for School Recognition (Accreditation) Purposes
   - 2-2. Consultant Visitations
   - 2-3. Mobile Educational Services
   - 2-4. Program or Project Evaluation

3. CONVENING ACTIVITIES
   - 3-1. Conferences
   - 3-2. Workshops
   - 3-3. Seminars
   - 3-4. Councils
   - 3-5. Clinics
   - 3-6. Tours
   - 3-7. Informal Contacts

4. REGULATORY ACTIVITIES
   - 4-1. Legislation
   - 4-2. Promulgation and Enforcement of Minimal Standards
   - 4-3. Recommendatory Acts
   - 4-4. Licensing and Certification
   - 4-5. Textbook Selection
   - 4-6. Report Filing and Recognition (Accreditation)

5. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES CENTERS
   - 5-1. SEA Regional Offices
   - 5-2. Demonstration Centers
   - 5-3. Instructional Materials
   - 5-4. Broadcasting Center
   - 5-5. Information Retrieval Centers

6. RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL SERVICES
   - 6-1. The implementation of research by SEA departments
   - 6-2. The maintenance of a data bank
   - 6-3. The provision of research consultant assistance to local schools
   - 6-4. The training of research personnel in local schools
   - 6-5. The support of research activities through SEA resources
   - 6-6. The dissemination of research results to schools, the legislature, universities and others

7. DEVELOPMENT
   - 7-1. Textbook Adoption
   - 7-2. Curriculum Guides
   - 7-3. Teaching Kits
   - 7-4. Media

8. TRAINING PROGRAMS
   - 8-1. Institutes
   - 8-2. Scholarship Programs
   - 8-3. In-Service Training Programs

9. FUNDING
   - 9-1. State School Reimbursement
   - 9-2. Program Participation
   - 9-3. Project Initiation
   - 9-4. Extra-State Funding

2. What categories of tasks (research, development, dissemination, evaluation, training, quality control) which the SEA might implement do the local school personnel perceive as most essential (least essential)?

3. What do local school personnel believe to be the most effective practices typically employed by the SEA?

4. Do local school personnel feel that the effectiveness of the practices used by the SEA is dependent upon certain factors characteristic of the local school?

5. To whom do local school personnel feel the SEA should direct its influence in order to achieve maximum impact to cause a portion of the schools of the state to implement particular educational programs or practices on a pilot basis?

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of public school personnel in the 101 counties of Illinois exclusive of Cook County. Exclusion of Cook County was based on the need to isolate the influence of this large metropolitan area containing the Chicago elementary and secondary schools as well as large suburban school districts. Among other considerations, unique organizational and administrative patterns prevalent in Cook County also suggested the need to reserve these school districts for future study. Local school personnel included in the population were district superintendents, principals, and individuals other than superintendents and principals having institutional responsiblity for curriculum and/or instruction.

An invited sample of 220 local school personnel was obtained through the process of cluster sampling of the 1080 school districts included in the defined population. One hundred seven school districts were systematically selected from the 1080 school districts, and superintendents and principals

in these 107 districts constituted a part of the invited sample. In addition, 90 curriculum-instruction personnel whose titles were indicative of their responsibility for curriculum and/or instruction were selected to complete the final portion of the invited sample.

The data producing sample was 64 percent of the invited sample and consisted of 198 public elementary and secondary school personnel including 58 district superintendents, 71 principals, and 69 curriculum-instruction personnel.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was used to collect data from elementary and secondary school personnel in the invited sample. The instrument was designed to obtain both structured and free response from the local school personnel.

Personnel of the Department of Research and Development of the Division of Planning and Development, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Illinois reviewed the initial version of the instrument and made suggestions for its content, composition, and production. Subsequently, the questionnaire was produced and pilot tested with personnel of the Florida State Department of Education.[4] Applying the results of the pilot test, the questionnaire was revised, recomposed, and produced in final form.

SEA Tasks: Findings

School personnel were presented fifteen tasks which the SEA might implement in the process of influencing curriculum and instruction in the local schools of the state and asked to classify five of the tasks as "most critical" and five of the tasks as "least critical." For each of the respondent groups and all groups combined a most critical:least critical ratio (MC:LC), in which the numerator (MC) was the frequency of most critical

ratings for the task and the denominator (LC) was the frequency of least critical ratings for the task, was calculated for each of the fifteen tasks. Tasks were then ranked in order of criticalness of the basis of the magnitudes of the MC:LC ratios; the tasks having greater MC:LC values being classified as higher in criticalness than those having lesser MC:LC values.

The data indicated that all respondent groups were generally in agreement as to the five tasks which should be most critical and also as to the five tasks which should be least critical. Further, there was very substantial agreement by the three groups of school personnel as to the rankings of the five most critical tasks and five least critical tasks among the fifteen tasks. (See Tables 1 and 2)

The five most critical tasks, in rank order, follow: (The first number in the ordered pair following the task is the MC:LC ratio; the second number is the frequency with which the task was rated "most critical.")

1. T-12, To aid local school personnel in the process of implementing educational programs and practices new to their school. (12.80:1, 128)

2. T-2, To conduct research for the purposes of providing local school personnel with reliable information relative to the availability and desirability of specific educational programs and practices in terms of student achievement, feasibility, and implications for adoption. (6.14:1, 129)

3. T-5, To create an awareness among local school personnel of the availability of desirable educational programs or practices. (6.06:1, 103)

4. T-1, To identify the existence of promising educational programs and practices that might be of interest to local school personnel. (3.44:1, 93)

5. T-13, To aid local school personnel in the process of maintaining the quality of new and/or established educational programs and practices in their school. (3.38:1, 81)

The five least critical tasks, in rank order, follow:

11. T-11, To train local school personnel to use specific educational programs and practices in the schools of the state. (0.38:1, 37)

TABLE 1

RANKINGS OF THE MOST CRITICAL TASKS WHICH MIGHT BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY IN THE PROCESS OF INFLUENCING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE LOCAL SCHOOLS, BY FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE AND BY CATEGORY OF LOCAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL[a]

Task Number	Frequency: Most Critical				Rank			
	(S)	(P)	(C)	(A)	(S)	(P)	(C)	(A)
T-2	37	47	45	129	1	2	2	1
T-12	33	48	47	128	2	1	1	2
T-5	27	38	38	103	4.5	3	3	3
T-1	27	29	37	93	4.5	4.5	4	4
T-14	30	29	28	87	3	4.5	6.5	5
T-13	22	28	31	81	7	6	5	6
T-10	20	20	27	67	8	9	8	7
T-15	25	26	14	65	6	7	10	8
T-8	17	11	28	56	9	12	6.5	9
T-6	14	22	17	53	10	8	9	10
T-11	7	18	12	37	12	10	11	11
T-3	9	10	10	29	11	13	12	12.5
T-4	5	15	9	29	14	11	13	12.5
T-7	6	5	7	18	13	14.5	14	14
T-9	2	5	3	10	15	14.5	15	15

[a](S)--Superintendents; (P)--Principals; (C)--Curriculum-Instruction Personnel; (A)--All.

TABLE 2

COMPOSITE RANKINGS OF THE MOST CRITICAL TASKS WHICH MIGHT BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY, BY FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE AND BY VALUE OF THE MOST CRITICAL:LEAST CRITICAL RATIO (MC:LC)

Task Number	Frequency: Most Critical	Rank by Frequency	MC:LC	Rank by MC:LC
T-12	128	2	12.80:1	1
T-2	129	1	6.14:1	2
T-5	103	3	6.06:1	3
T-1	93	4	3.44:1	4
T-13	81	6	3.38:1	5
T-14	87	5	1.98:1	6
T-6	53	10	1.13:1	7
T-8	56	9	1.10:1	8
T-15	65	8	0.93:1	9
T-10	67	7	0.91:1	10
T-11	37	11	0.38:1	11
T-3	29	12.5	0.26:1[a]	12
T-4	29	12.5	0.26:1[a]	13
T-7	18	14	0.15:1	14
T-9	10	15	0.07:1	15

[a]MC:LC values differ in the third decimal place.

12. T-3, To invent, design, or develop new educational programs and practices for use in the schools of the state. (0.26:1, 29)

13. T-4, To package educational programs or practices in a form that makes them usable in the schools of the state. (0.26:1, 29)

14. T-7, To cause a number of the schools of the state to implement a specific educational program or practice on a pilot basis. (0.15:1, 18)

15. T-9, To cause the schools of the state to adopt or implement a specific educational program or practice. (0.07:1, 10)

The five most critical tasks included the two tasks from the category of quality control (T-12 and T-13), the two tasks from the category of research (T-1 and T-2), and one task from the category of dissemination (T-5). Among the five least critical tasks were one task from the category of training (T-11), the two tasks from the category of development (T-3 and T-4), and two tasks from the category of dissemination (T-7 and T-9).

Examination of the combined ratings of the tasks in each of the six task categories revealed that: (1) the highest ranked category was that of quality control, with a MC:LC ratio of 6.15:1; (2) the next highest ranked category was research, with a MC:LC ratio of 4.63:1, (3) the third ranked category, evaluation, had a MC:LC ratio of 1.33:1; and (4) the fourth, fifth, and sixth ranked categories of dissemination, training, and development had MC:LC ratios of 0.63:1, 0.60:1, and 0.26:1 respectively.

The school personnel were asked to list any other tasks they felt to be critical in the process of influencing curriculum and instructional programs or activities in the local schools. Approximately twelve percent of the respondents, two-thirds of whom were curriculum-instruction personnel, made comments relating to tasks. Although analysis of the comments revealed that no tasks which were new or significantly different from the fifteen

tasks presented in the questionnaire were identified, the respondents' comments did indicate a desire for SEA leadership and assistance of the type reflected by the fifteen tasks.

The Effectiveness of SEA Practices: Findings

The local school personnel rated the general effectiveness of twenty-four practices which the SEA could employe in the process of influencing curriculum and instructional activities in the local schools on a five point scale as: 5--extremely effective, 4--highly effective, 3--moderately effective, 2--slightly effective, or 1--ineffective. Ratings of the individual practices by the superintendents, principals, and curriculum-personnel were found to be in very substantial agreement, as for only two practices of the twenty-four were differences in group ratings of a given practice statistically significant. (See Table 3)

The findings indicated that the respondents cited none of the practices as extremely effective; only four of the practices as highly effective; five practices as more than moderately effective, but not highly effective; fourteen practices as moderately to more than moderately effective; and one practice as less than moderately effective, but more than slightly effective. It was also noted that none of the practices could be classified as slightly effective or ineffective.

The four practices judged to be highly effective were, in rank order, as follows: (The number preceding the practice is the rank; the number following the practice is the overall mean rating.)

(1) Financial reimbursement on a program or project basis granted by the SEA. (4.11)

(2.5) Granting or withholding of accreditation status of the school by the SEA. (3.95)

TABLE 3

RATINGS[a] BY LOCAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL OF THE GENERAL EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE EDUCATION AGENCY PRACTICES USED IN INFLUENCING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

Item Number and Practice	Response Groups						All	
	Superintendents		Principals		Curr.-Inst. Personnel			
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
22. Financial reimbursement on a program or project basis granted by the SEA	4.11	1	4.07	1	4.15	1	4.11	1
6. Granting or withholding of accreditation status of the school by the SEA	3.91	4	3.94	3	3.99	3	3.95	2.5
23. Granting or withholding of financial reimbursement throu through non-accreditation classification by the SEA	3.39	6	3.90	4	4.04	2	3.95	2.5
12. Legislation in the form of statutes enforced by the SEA	3.95	2	3.96	2	3.79	4	3.90	4
10. Workshops arranged by the SEA	3.71	8	3.70	6	3.75	6	3.72	5

TABLE 3--Continued

Item Number and Practice	Response Groups						All	
	Superintendents		Principals		Curr.-Inst. Personnel			
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
7. School visitations by consultants of the SEA for purposes other than formal evaluation or accreditation	3.91	4	3.66	7	3.53	8	3.68	6
5. School visitations by consultants of the SEA for evaluation and accreditation purposes	3.91	4	3.74	5	3.40	12	3.67	7.5
13. Policy promulgation and enforcement of minimal standards by the SEA	3.73	7	3.64	8	3.66	7	3.67	7.5
21. Instructional programs in the form of in-service institutes implemented through the SEA	3.57	9	3.59	9	3.76	5	3.64	9
9. Conferences arranged by the SEA	3.43	10	3.35	12	3.43	10	3.40	10.5

TABLE 3--Continued

Item Number and Practice	Response Groups						All	
	Superintendents		Principals		Curr.-Inst. Personnel			
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
11. Tours of educational facilities for in-service educators sponsored by the SEA	3.20	15	3.48	10	3.50	9	3.40	10.5
3. Instructional guides and bulletins published by the SEA	3.36	12	3.28	15	3.34	13.5	3.32	12.5
18. Curriculum guides prepared and distributed by the SEA	3.34	13	3.31	13	3.30	15	3.32	12.5
20. Media production or distribution: films, recordings, or tapes made available through the SEA	3.20	15	3.24	17	3.41	11	3.28	14
2. Letters and memoranda from the SEA	3.39	11	3.09	20.5	3.29	16	3.25	15
15. Demonstration centers established by the SEA	2.93	22	3.36	11	3.34	13.5	3.23	16

TABLE 3--Continued

Item Number and Practice	Response Groups						All	
	Superintendents		Principals		Curr.-Inst. Personnel			
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
16. Instructional materials centers supported by the SEA	3.11	18	3.29	14	3.24	17.5	3.22	17
24. Research in the curriculum-instructional areas implemented by the SEA	3.07	19	3.17	18.5	3.24	17.5	3.17	18
19. Teaching kits distributed by the SEA	3.20	15	3.09	20.5	3.17	19	3.15	19
8. School visitations by mobile units from the SEA	3.15	17	3.17	18.5	3.07	20	3.13	20
4. Films, recordings, or tapes distributed by the SEA	3.00	21	3.25	16	3.02	21.5	3.10	21
1. The monthly journal published by the SEA	3.04	20	2.91	23	3.00	23	2.98	22.5
17. An SEA maintained data bank and information retrieval center	2.87	23	3.04	22	3.02	21.5	2.98	22.5

TABLE 3--Continued

Item Number and Practice	Response Groups						All	
	Superintendents		Principals		Curr.-Inst. Personnel			
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
14. Report filing in the form of annual or project reports required by the SEA	2.80	24	2.79	24	2.70	24	2.76	24

[a]Rating Scale: Extremely Effective----5
Highly Effective-------4
Moderately Effective---3
Slightly Effective-----2
Ineffective------------1

(2.5) Granting or withholding of financial reimbursement through non-accreditation classification by the SEA. (3.95)

(4) Legislation in the form of statutes enforced by the SEA. (3.90)

The five practices considered to be more than moderately effective, but not highly effective were, in rank order, as follows:

(5) Workshops arranged by the SEA. (3.72)

(6) School visitations by consultants of the SEA for purposes other than formal evaluation or accreditation. (3.68)

(7.5) School visitations by consultants of the SEA for evaluation and accreditation purposes. (3.67)

(7.5) Policy promulgation and enforcement of minimal standards by the SEA. (3.67)

(9) Instructional programs in the form of in-service institutes implemented through the SEA. (3.64)

(10.5) Conferences arranged by the SEA. (3.40)

(10.5) Tours of educational facilities for in-service educators sponsored by the SEA. (3.40)

(12.5) Curriculum guides prepared and distributed by the SEA. (3.32)

(12.5) Instructional guides and bulletins published by the SEA. (3.32)

(14) Media production or distribution: films, recordings, or tapes made available through the SEA. (3.28)

(15) Letters and memoranda from the SEA. (3.25)

(16) Demonstration centers established by the SEA. (3.23)

(17) Instructional materials centers supported by the SEA. (3.22)

(18) Research in the curriculum-instructional areas implemented by the SEA. (3.17)

(19) Teaching kits distributed by the SEA. (3.15)

(20) School visitations by mobile units from the SEA. (3.13)

(21) Films, recordings, or tapes distributed by the SEA. (3.10)

(22.5) The monthly journal published by the SEA. (2.98)

(22.5) An SEA maintained data bank and information retrieval center. (2.98)

(24) Report filing in the form of annual or project reports. (2.76)

Comments by the respondents as to what they had observed or felt to be the most effective use of a particular practice as employed by the SEA were few. Less than ten percent (19) of the school personnel made any sort of comment relative to the individual practices.

Characteristics of Local Schools Related to the Effectiveness of SEA Practices: Findings

The school personnel were asked if they felt that the effectiveness of the practices used by the SEA to influence local school activities was dependent upon certain factors. Examination of the response to this question indicated that the effectiveness of SEA practices was felt to be dependent upon:

1. school size by 45 percent of the respondents,
2. grade level by only 14 percent of the respondents,
3. school location (inner-city, rural, suburban, urban) by 45 percent of the school personnel,
4. affluence of the school district (high or low tax base) by 59 percent of the school personnel, and
5. position of the personnel to whom the practices were directed by 43 percent of the respondents.

Respondents indicated that practices which are particularly effective in influencing superintendents were, in descending order of frequency cited, funding, legislation, research (especially within the local school district), policy promulgation, and workshops. Principals were thought to be most

influenced by, in descending order of frequency cited, convening activities such as conferences and workshops, school visitations by SEA consultants, training programs of an in-service nature, and publications providing information. Supervisors were perceived to be most frequently influenced by, in descending order of frequency cited, convening activities such as conferences, workshops, and seminars; school visitations by consultants; and informational publications such as bulletins and newsletters. Teachers were considered to be primarily influenced almost equally by convening activities such as conferences and workshops, and training programs, especially in the form of inservice education.

Finally, the school personnel were asked to indicate the order in which the SEA should direct its influence to six target groups in order to achieve the greatest impact under the assumption that the SEA deemed it desirable to cause a portion of the schools of the state to implement a particular educational program or practice on a pilot basis. Their response suggested that the SEA practices should be directed to target groups in the following order of priority: (1 = highest priority; 6 = lowest priority.)

1. superintendents,
2. principals,
3. teachers,
4. supervisors of the school or school district,
5. school boards, and
6. Superintendents of Educational Service Regions.

Conclusions and Inferences Related to the Questions Investigated

Illinois school personnel perceived the most critical tasks that might be implemented by the state education agency in the process of influencing curriculum and instructional activities in the local schools as:

First, to aid local school personnel in the process of implementing educational programs and practices new to their school.

Second, to conduct research for the purposes of providing local school personnel with reliable information relative to the availability and desirability of specific educational programs and practices in terms of student achievement, feasibility, and implications for adoption.

Third, to create an awareness among local schol personnel of the availability of desirable educational programs or practices.

Fourth, to identify the existence of promising educational programs and practices that might be of interest to local school personnel.

Fifth, to aid local school personnel in the process of maintaining the quality of new and/or established educational programs and practices in their schools.

Although the task, to cause the schools of the state to evaluate their present educational programs and practices for the purpose of modification, was not perceived as most critical, it probably should be classified as very important.

Illinois school personnel perceived the least critical tasks that might be implemented by the state education agency in the process of influencing curriculum and instructional activities in the local schools as (in ascending order of merit):

First, to cause the schools of the state to adopt or implement a specific educational program or practice.

Second, to cause a number of the schools of the state to implement a specific educational program or practice on a pilot basis.

Third, to package educational programs or practices in a form that makes them usable in the schools of the state.

Fourth, to invent, design, or develop new educational programs or practices for use in the schools in the state.

Fifth, to train local school personnel to use specific educational programs and practices in the schools of the state.

It was clearly evident that tasks in the categories of quality control and research were thought to be most essential by the school personnel, while the tasks in the category of development were felt to be least essential.

Although the school personnel were presented with twenty-four practices which might be utilized by the SEA in influencing curriculum and instructional activities in the local schools, they evidently felt none of the practices to be extremely effective as typically employed by the SEA. However, the superintendents, principals, and curriculum-instruction personnel all perceived four practices, granting of financial reimbursement on a program or project basis; granting or withholding of financial reimbursement through nonaccreditation classification; and enforcement of statutes by the SEA, as highly effective. Furthermore, the superintendents, principals, and curriculum-instruction personnel all perceived the four practices, workshops arranged by the SEA; school visitations by consultants of the SEA for purposes other than formal evaluation or accreditation; policy promulgation and enforcement of minimal standards by the SEA; and instructional programs in the form of in-service institutes implemented through the SEA, to be more than moderately effective, but not highly effective.

In summary, the ratings of the SEA practices seemed to suggest that the school personnel perceived at least one-third of the practices to be at best moderately effective, another one-third of the practices as more than moderately effective, and one-sixth of the practices as highly effective. It was also concluded that the respondents did not believe any of the practices to be slightly effective or ineffective, nor did they regard any of the practices as extremely effective. Additionally, those practices perceived as highly effective were most likely to be directed to enforcing compliance with standards or regulations for funding and/or accreditation. One might hypothesize

that those SEA practices which the local school personnel perceived as highly effective are the practices which they would least like the SEA to employ, and probably are also the ones which the SEA least vigorously employs.

Of the factors considered in this study, the school personnel felt that the effectiveness of practices used by the SEA to influence local school activities was most likely to be dependent upon the affluence of the school district. It is possible that the more affluent school districts can more readily participate in SEA sponsored or administered projects, programs, and activities because they have the resources and expert personnel which are frequently required.

Finally, the local school personnel felt that if the SEA wanted to cause a portion of the school of the state to implement particular educational programs or practices on a pilot basis, it should direct its influence with first priority to school district superintendents for maximum impact. Principals and teachers were thought to merit second and third priority, respectively. Supervisors of schools or school districts, school boards, and Superintendents of Educational Service Regions were accorded lesser priority.

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